

REMARKS

In the Office Action mailed August 19, 2008, claims 1, 5-10, and 14-25 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) as anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 6,543,871 (Rosen); and claims 2 and 11 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as unpatentable over Rosen in view of U.S. Patent No. 7,330,291 (Abe).

It is respectfully submitted that Rosen does not anticipate the subject matter of claim 1.

Claim 1 recites a method of printing with a flexible number of passes, comprising:

- obtaining print data having a content defined by data elements corresponding to a pattern of dots of **a colorant**;
- determining if at least one constraint on distribution of the print data exists so that forming the pattern in only one pass is precluded, and, if the at least one constraint exists, then:
 - distributing subsets of the data elements, corresponding to interspersed sub-patterns of the pattern of dots of **the colorant**, to a number of pass assignments, the number and the subsets being determined by the content of the print data and the at least one constraint, and
 - delivering **the colorant** to overlapping regions of a print medium with passes performed according to the pass assignments to form the pattern.

As clearly stated by Rosen, the number of passes selected for printing image data is of passes for different colors. Figs. 3a-3d of Rosen show four masks for an image to be printed in **four passes using four colors**. Rosen, 5:27-30. As specifically stated by Rosen, “[e]ach of the four masks shown is used for each of the four colors, one mask per color **per pass**, and the masks are then rotated to another color for the next pass, until all four colors have been printed in four passes.” *Id.*, 5:31-34.

In contrast, claim 1 recites distributing subsets of the data elements, corresponding to interspersed sub-patterns of the pattern of dots of **the colorant**, to a number of pass assignments, the number and the subsets being determined by the content of the print data in the at least one constraint. Thus, it is clear that the number of pass assignments over which the subsets of the data elements are distributed is a number of pass assignments for data elements that correspond to a pattern of dots of the **same** colorant. In contrast, the number of passes selected in Rosen refers to the number of passes for printing **different colorants**.

As recited in the last clause of claim 1, **the colorant** is delivered to overlapping regions of a print medium with passes performed according to the **pass assignments** to form the pattern. The pass assignments in this last clause of claim 1 refer to the number of pass assignments over which subsets of the data elements have been distributed. In contrast, in Rosen, different colorants are delivered to a print medium in different passes.

In view of the foregoing, it is clear that the subject matter of claim 1 is allowable over Rosen.

The other independent claims (10, 17, 19, 20, 22, 24, and 25) are similarly allowable over Rosen.

Dependent claims, including newly added dependent claim 26, are allowable for at least the same reasons as corresponding base claims.

In addition, claim 8 recites that distributing the subsets of the data elements is performed without using any mask. This is in contrast to the subject matter of Rosen, which requires the use of masks.

Independent claim 17 also recites distributing print data without using any masks, and is therefore, also further allowable for the foregoing reason.

In view of the allowability of base claims over Rosen, it is respectfully submitted that the obviousness rejection of dependent claims over Rosen and Abe has also been overcome.

Allowance of all claims is therefore respectfully requested. The Commissioner is authorized to charge any additional fees and/or credit any overpayment to Deposit Account No. 08-2025 (200312558-1).

Respectfully submitted,

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